Immigration - 1932

OUR ALIEN PROBLEM IS VASTLY CHANGED

With Departures Exceeding Arrivals, New Factors Have Entered the Situation

By HAROLD FIELDS.

AMERICA has witnessed a right-about-face in immigration. Because of technological processes, because of the absence of free economic land, and because of an increasingly significant unemployment problem, we have had to abandon the welcome mat at our door and almost change the sign of "entrance" to "exit." As a result, the immigration for a whole year now is no greater than that for a single month ten years ago or for ten days a quarter century ago.

For the first time in history more foreign-born persons are leaving our soil for permanent return abroad than are coming as immigrants. For every five immigrants there was only one emigrant in the fiscal year ended June 30, 1930; in 1931 there were three and in 1932 there were fifteen.

Yet the changes have not been confined to total numbers alone. The whole complexion of our immigration problem has been altered: there is a difference in the proportion of sexes entering the country; there is a difference in occupational types; there is a difference in nationality; there is even a difference in the attitude of mind that characterizes the present-day immigrant. It is a new, provoking problem that demands study and consideration.

Restrictive Measures.

Years ago, after a long period of practically unlimited immigration, we came to realize that limits should be set according to the absorptive capacity of the land. There followed a series of restrictive laws from 1921 (when 800,000 entered) to the present, which, combined with administrative policies and economic conditions, have brought about the present change.

In September, 1930, President Hoover issued an order instructing our consuls abroad not to admit aliens to this country who were likely to become public charges. As a result, the number of arriving aliens dropped from 241,000 in the fiscal year 1930 to 97,000 in 1931. There is a certainty, based upon figures up to May 31 this year, that arriving aliens approximated but 35,000 in the fiscal year 1932, compared with perhaps more than 100,000 departing.

One important effect of the Executive order has been to decrease the proportion of male laborers coming to this country and to increase the proportion of female relatives coming to join men already here. Present immigrants are mainly wives and daughters joining husbands and fathers; the union of families will cause their dollars to be spent here rather than abroad.

In the decade ended in 1920, males constituted 64 per cent of immigrants and in the next decade they still formed 55 per cent of the total. The present decade, however, began with only 41 per cent in the fiscal year 1931, and 40 per cent in 1932.

Occupational Status.

As to occupations, the number of immigrants listed as professional workers rose from 5 per cent in the fiscal year 1931 to 7.2 per cent in the eleven months ended last May 31. Those who had no occupation, consisting in the main of women and children, jumped from 54.5 per cent to 70 per cent in the same period. Common laborers decreased most heavily in percentage, while skilled workers dropped from 14 to 8 per cent.

Figures as to conjugal status of arriving aliens bear out the slow trend toward family unions. Where as married persons constituted only 36.7 per cent of all immigrants in 1931, they increased to 47.1 per cent in the fiscal year just closed.

Three Classes of Emigrants.

In this presentation let us now consider the large numbers leaving this country for other lands. The emigrants are of three classifications: (1) those who are being deported (2) those who are departing of their own volition to avoid risk of deportation, and (3), the largest group, composed of those who are leaving of their own free will without fear of deportation.

More aliens are being expelled from the United States in one month nowadays than were sent out during all of 1918. The first six months of the last fiscal year, beginning with June, 1931, saw 9,234 deported, about one-third of them to Mexico alone. In the same six months 2,231 aliens were sent at their own request to their native countries to avoid being deported by warrant, and 47,139 left of their own desire. Altogether the departures numbered 58,604 for the half year, leading to the estimate of more than 100,000 for the full twelvemonth.

The bulk of the aliens who are being deported or who are leaving the country to avoid deportation are generally those who entered the United States for permanent residence without legal consent or examination. The host of our voluntary emigrants, however, a large proportion of them common laborers, are going abroad with their families because the relatively small savings that they have been able to retain here will purchase much more at home.

This trend of family emigrations can be shown by figures. Before 1920 eight of every ten emigrants were males; in the next decade this proportion fell to 7; in 1931 and 1932, to 6.6. In other words, the proportion of females leaving is fast approaching that of the males, this, despite the fact that a far greater number of men than women have been deported or have left through fear of deportation.

Tendencies Summarized.

Summarizing the trends of immigration and emigration, it may be said that proportionately more women are coming here and proportionately fewer potential workers. The tendency is toward the union of heretofore separated family groups and an exodus of unskilled laborers and their families. With departures exceeding arrivals, fears of competitive labor and lowered standards of living need no longer enter the immigration problem.

Yet certain considerations remain, and not the least important is the assimilation of these aliens who do come to America. Under assimilation are generally included the three concepts of education, naturalization and adaptation.

In the field of education we need more afternoon classes for foreign-born women, more evening classes in English and citizenship, and more instruction in national and international affairs. There is an improvement along these lines in all sections of the country, as shown by a large decrease in illiteracy between 1920 and 1930, but in fairness it must be confessed that it is being accomplished as much through the progressiveness, or perhaps aggressiveness, of private agencies as through public boards of education.

Drop in Naturalization.

In the matter of naturalization we have a complicated picture. The number of aliens applying for papers has shown a severe drop. This drop bears no relation to the reduction in numbers of immigrants admissible under President Hoover's instructions, because these aliens are not yet eligible for citizenship. The diminution followed immediately upon an increase, effective July, 1929, in the naturalization fees from $5 for the complete process to a total of from $20 to $35. Whereas in the two years prior to this change in the law 535,000 first papers were granted, only 168,000 were issued in the following two years—a drop of 367,000. For the same period there was a drop in applicants for second papers from 180,000 to 235,000—almost half—and in the numbers of those receiving citizenship papers from 458,000 to 312,000.

This decrease is somewhat on the mend, when month-by-month comparisons are made, because of the citizenship requirement for employment that is being stressed. Late arrivals have been much quicker to apply for first papers than were their predecessors of some years back.

Indeed the immigrant arriving today is, in a sense, more American-minded—even before he arrives—than was his precursor. This attitude is a result both of American propaganda abroad (not by the government) and the number of articles dealing with American progress that are to be found in the press of Continental Europe.

Thus the opportunity for quickly assimilating these fewer arrivals is great and should not be missed. With the 5,000,000 to 5,500,000 unnaturalized aliens now in this country constituting, after all, only a small fraction of our people—a fraction that will be steadily reduced from year to year—we find ourselves, for the first time in history, about to have a population that is almost a constant and therefore capable of homogeneous development.

Negroes Barred From Mexico

Nogales, Sonora, Mex., Oct. 17.—(AP) All negroes are temporarily prohibited entrance into Mexico because of application of the recent immigration law, Arcadio E. Padilla, immigration chief, said today.

"This law is being enforced through the Mexican, U. S. border from the Gulf of Mexico to the Pacific ocean," Senor Pedilla said. "Due to the recent enactment of a federal law requiring all foreigners to obtain border crossing cards, prohibited races are denied this privilege.

"I have wired the department of labor asking for special consideration here insofar as it pertains to soldiers of the 25th Infantry (stationed at Fort Douglas, Ariz. previously Washington granted special permit giving our uniformed soldiers entrance into border cities. I am trying to reciprocate the friendly gesture. However, I can only wait for final word from my superiors.

"Many other races are also prohibited including the Gypsy, Hindu, Chinese, Senagalese—other races are merely restricted such as the Greek. No Greek will be admitted into Mexico job unless he is a citizen of the States."

The restrictive immigration law does not apply to tourists.

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Japanese American

When the American casually interested talks of the Japanese problem in this country, he is thinking in terms of immigration. In California today there are 97,456 Japanese, or 70 per cent of all in this country, and 50 per cent of the California Japanese are themselves American born. Says Tsutomu Obana in Pacific Affairs:

At the present time the problem of the American-born Japanese may not be so acute as the other problems of California, but in the near future it must be faced seriously on the ground that the problems of American-born Japanese constitute, from the viewpoint of legal status, an American problem. It becomes of more importance year after year and replaces the old "Japanese question" as a new and complicated question for California to face.

Immigration could be and has been practically stopped, but fecundity is another matter. The Constitution exists to protect the native born in his rights. But it can not alter what Mr. Obana points out as the serious problem of vocational opportunity, not only because of the lack of worth-while guidance but because of the existence to a certain extent of a racial barrier.

The negro problem arose from racial beginnings as small. Concentration of the largest numbers of a prolific race in one State is likely to make this a major problem for the future. Mr. Obana sees that and politely raises the question. It is not an academic one for the almost 75,000 of these California Japanese now of school age or younger, but who are faced with the necessity of making a future living in a land that persists in racial hostility.

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ASK NEW TREATY WITH MEXICO ON ADMITTING NEGRO

The state department has been urged by Dennis V. Allen, chairman of the San Diego Race Relations committee, to negotiate a new treaty between the United States and Mexico regarding passage of negroes across the border, because of the following telegram which Allen has just received from Secretary of State Henry H. Stimson:

"This department understands that regulations of the Mexican government relating to the entry of negroes into Mexico applies to all persons of that race and not merely to those who are American citizens.

"A sovereign nation has the power to prohibit the entrance of aliens of any class to its dominions or to admit them only upon such conditions as it may see fit to prescribe. The immigration laws of the United States contain provisions applying this principle, consequently, the department cannot appropriately protest against such regulations."

The San Diego Race Relations committee filed a protest with the department of state when negro laborers were stopped by Mexican immigration authorities from entering Mexico at Mexicali. With the receipt of the message from Stimson, the committee is devoting its efforts to urging the enactment of a new treaty which will permit American negroes to enter Mexico, Allen said.